

# Jennett's Park CE Primary

## Bereavement Policy



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## Jennett's Park CE Primary School Bereavement POLICY

### School Background:

Jennett's Park CE Primary School is openly inclusive Christian school, welcoming all children from the whole community to a caring and happy environment where they can achieve to the very best of their abilities. At Jennett's Park CE we believe that all children are unique and we encourage them to develop their strengths and creativity as individuals. We emphasise the development of the whole-learner physically, intellectually, emotionally and ethically. We wish for children to flourish and achieve under God's Love.

We promise as a staff and community to try to serve the common good with our work as part of the Church of England.

<b>Educating for Wisdom, Knowledge and Skills</b>	To help grow resourceful , resilient and reflective children who are equipped with the skills , knowledge and tenacity empower themselves, their learning throughout their lives.
<b>Educating for Hope and Aspiration</b>	To inspire and enrich lives beyond current opportunities and experiences in order to open minds to the potential their future holds
<b>Educating for Community and Living Well Together</b>	To be a multi-cultural, inclusive community of individuals loved by God who feel valued and involved where we create qualities of character to enable people to flourish.
<b>Educating for Dignity and Respect</b>	That children might know how much that they are loved and valued by so that they might show dignity and respect for themselves and others by carefully and safely thinking through their actions.

### Rationale:

Every 22 minutes in the UK a parent of dependent children dies, leaving about 41,000 bereaved children each year. Many more are bereaved of a grandparent, sibling, friend or other significant person, and, sadly, around 12,000 children die in the UK each year. In this recent National Crisis more children have suffered bereavement than at any point in recent years.

Within our school community there will almost always be some recently bereaved children who are struggling with their own situation – or sometimes the entire school community is impacted by the death of a member of staff or a pupil. We would hope to not encounter such circumstances, but the statistical inevitability of such an occurrence implies the necessity of having a Bereavement Policy in place in order that we might be proactive, rather than reactive, when responding to these sensitive situations.

Empathic understanding in the familiar and secure surroundings of school may be all the bereavement support some children – or staff – require, though referral to more specialist support should be a consideration where the impact of grief is more complex. Additional information and resources can be accessed in the links at the end of this document.

## **Objectives**

The core intentions of the policy are:

- To support pupils and/or staff before (where applicable), during, and after bereavement
- To enhance effective communication and clarify the pathway of support between school, family and community.
- To identify key staff within school and Academy, and clarify the pathway of support.

The Children Act 1989 aimed to ensure that the welfare of the child was paramount, working in partnership with parents to protect the child from harm ([http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b\\_section2](http://www.careandthelaw.org.uk/eng/b_section2)). All intentions of this policy endorse that aim as we endeavour to counter any adverse effects of bereavement and maintain pupils' emotional well-being.

## **The role of the governing body**

- To approve policy and ensure its implementation, to be reviewed in three years.
- To adapt budget in light of strategic recommendations

## **The role of the head teacher**

- To monitor progress and liaise with external agencies.
- To respond to media enquiries.
- To be first point of contact for family/child concerned.
- To keep the governing body fully informed.

## **The role of the Local Authority**

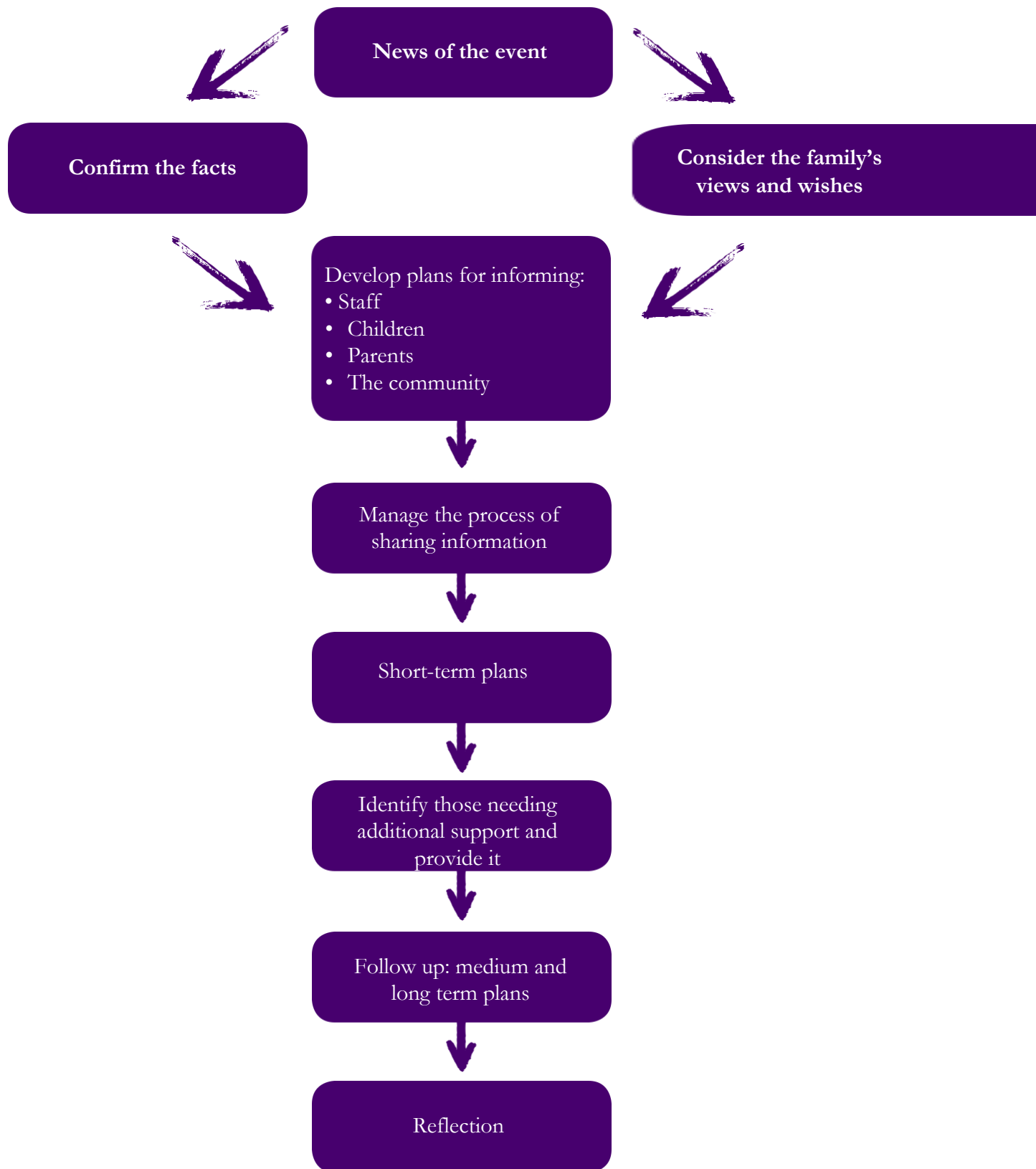
- To advise and support staff. Consult on referral pathways and identification of complex grief.

The role of Inclusion Team (including Family support worker, Educational Psychologist and SENDCOs)

- To have bereavement support training and cascade learning to other staff

Procedures:

**Bereavement and Critical Incidents: A sequence of response for schools / settings**



Contact with the deceased's family should be established by the Head teacher and their wishes respected in communicating with others. Factual information is essential to avoid rumour and confusion, whilst being sensitive to cultural and religious considerations.

Staff should be informed before pupils and be prepared (through prior training) to share information in age-appropriate ways, as agreed for each individual circumstance.

Pupils who are affected should be informed, preferably in small groups, by someone known to them.

A letter to all school families affected should be composed at the earliest opportunity and a decision made as to whom, and how, it should be distributed.

The school should be aware that the school timetable may need a degree of flexibility to accommodate the needs and wellbeing of children affected by the situation. However, minimal disruption to the timetable also offers a sense of security and familiarity.

Staff affected by the death will be offered ongoing support as appropriate by Inclusion Team

In consultation with the bereaved family, arrangements for funeral attendance may be clarified, with the consideration of full or partial school closure in some circumstances.

Where necessary a press statement should be prepared by the Head Teacher

School should be aware that the impact of bereavement follows a child throughout their school life so information should be recorded and shared with relevant people, particularly at transition points.

Supporting staff who are supporting bereaved pupils

Working with bereaved children is painful, and those staff members who step up to the plate will also need our support.

- **Don't let them go at it alone** – make sure more than one staff member is assigned to each bereaved child. Not only will this share the load, but it'll also ensure that all staff assigned to a child have someone to talk to without breaching confidentiality
- **Check in with them regularly** – be proactive, and be the one reaching out. Staff may feel guilty about asking for your time right now
- **Be prepared to step in** – tell them to step back if it becomes clear they're overwhelmed
- **Make bereavement training available** – many organisations offer training for school staff,

Talking about death and grieving

When they talk to bereaved children

- **Listen and validate** – children often don't recognise their feelings as grief. Let them know that whatever they're feeling is normal and okay
- **Acknowledge their fears** – children's fears, no matter how irrational, are real and we can't take them away. Just knowing that someone they trust is listening to them is helpful
- **Reassure, but only as much as you can do so honestly** – for example, a child whose family member has died from COVID-19 will quite rationally be afraid of other family members dying. It's unhelpful to try to calm a child's fears by saying that won't happen when it already has, and it can diminish the child's trust in you. Rather, acknowledge the possibility but counter with facts about how rare this is
- **Check their understanding** – children can be very literal, and what might seem obvious to us may not be so clear to them. As they talk to them, regularly check that they understand what you've said

- **Share your own feelings** – it's okay to let children know that staff are also sad and upset. It can be reassuring that what they're feeling is normal

If the bereaved child is struggling to express themselves

Grief is overwhelming at any age, and children may struggle to express what they're going through. Staff can get the conversation started by:

- Sharing [Lost for words](#) – a free e-book of advice by grieving children for grieving children
- Sharing ['Thunks on death'](#) (about halfway down the page) – a set of cards designed to open discussion about death and grief
- Completing [memory books](#) (see under the heading 'Resources for children and young people')

All staff to have training on bereavement

Child Bereavement UK **together with London Grid for Learning (LGfL):**

[Managing a sudden death in the school community](#) – includes tips on managing social media and media relations

## Appendix 1 Training resources for schools

### Winston's Wish

- [Bereavement support for schools](#)
- [Talking to children about coronavirus](#)
- [How to say goodbye when a funeral isn't possible](#)
- [Supporting bereaved children with SEN](#)

### Child Bereavement UK

- [Supporting a bereaved pupil](#)
- [Supporting pupils who've been affected by coronavirus](#)
- [Supporting a bereaved child in an early years setting](#)
- [Supporting a bereaved pupil in a primary school](#)
- [Supporting a bereaved student in secondary school](#)

### Child Bereavement UK **together with London Grid for Learning (LGfL):**

[Managing a sudden death in the school community](#) – includes tips on managing social media and media relations

- [Child Bereavement UK](#)
- [Winston's Wish](#)
- [Cruse Bereavement Care](#)
- [EduCare](#)

## Appendix 2 Resources for parents

### The NHS

[Children and bereavement](#) – includes lots of resources for parents and children, including helplines and tips for creating a memory box

### Child Bereavement UK

- [Telling a child that someone has died](#)
- [Parenting bereaved children - a video](#)

### Cruse Bereavement Care

- [Children and young people's physical responses to grief](#)
- [Children and young people's emotional responses to grief](#)

### Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families

- [On My Mind](#) is a resource for children to learn how to support their own mental health and wellbeing. It stresses the importance of [self-care](#)

### Appendix 3 What can help?

While every child and young person will respond slightly differently, there are things which you can do to help them to understand what has happened, process their own feelings and emotions and, in time, move through the grieving process.

- Be honest and open; explain why the person died at an age-appropriate level. Answer questions as truthfully as you can in a way the child can understand. It's okay not to have all the answers and to say that you don't know.
- Use clear language such as "dead" and "death" rather than what we may perceive as more comforting language such as "gone to sleep" or "loss". These phrases can be confusing for children and may cause them to believe that if someone is lost then they can be found, for example.
- Don't force your child to talk about what has happened but create an atmosphere where they know they can talk about their experience of the death and that you will listen to what they have to say. Reassure them if they blame themselves in any way, which can be common.
- Talk about the person who has died and share happy memories of them.
- Don't be afraid to express your own emotions and explain to your child that this is a normal part of the process when someone dies. However, don't expect them to look after you as much as you look after them.
- Reassure your child that it is okay for them to be upset too and help them to find ways of expressing difficult feelings which are

not disruptive or destructive. Help them to understand that their behaviours may be as a result of feeling angry because they miss the person who has died and don't understand why it happened. Talking this through will help them to better understand their own emotions.

- Continue with established routines as much as possible, encouraging children to engage with their usual activities and interests so that some there is a sense of familiarity.
- Don't expect your child to grieve in exactly the same way that you do or that a sibling does.
- Reassure your child that it is still okay to laugh and have fun.
- As the death of a loved one can hugely impact a family routine and structure, you should prepare your child in advance for changes they may face.
- Help your child to say goodbye; include them in discussions about the funeral and allow them to make some choices in how they would like to take part. At the moment, when funerals are likely to be much more restricted, find alternative ways to help them say goodbye such as gathering photos, making a memory box, letting off balloons or planting some seeds.
- Allow yourself time to grieve so that you are best able to support your child.
- On the child's return to school, share information with their teacher so that they are aware of what they have experienced and how they have dealt with it. Returning to a different situation may trigger some feelings and emotions which you felt they had dealt with.



## Appendix 4 Children's understanding of death at different ages

### Children under 2 years of age

Babies and young children have no understanding of the concept of death yet, long before they are able to talk, babies are likely to react to upset and changes in their environment brought about by the absence of a significant person who responded to their needs for care and nourishment on a daily basis. They will also be impacted by the emotional withdrawal that may happen if a parent or main carer is bereaved.

Up to the age of 6 months, babies will experience a sense of abandonment and insecurity which may result in increased crying and disruption of sleep and feeding. From around the age of 8 months or so, babies begin to develop a 'mental image' of the person who has died and have a sense of 'missing them'. Babies at this age may cry more or become more withdrawn; they may lose interest in toys or food and, as they develop motor skills and language, may call out for or search for the person who has died. You can help by giving lots of reassurance, and by keeping to normal routines as much as possible.

### Children aged 2 to 5 years

Young children are interested in the idea of death in birds and animals. They can begin to use the word 'dead' and develop an awareness that this is different to being alive. Children of this age do not understand abstract concepts like 'forever' and cannot grasp that death is permanent. Their limited understanding may lead to an apparent lack of reaction when told about a death, and they may ask many questions about where the person who has died is and when that person will come back. Children at this age expect the person to return.

Young children tend to interpret what they are told in a very literal and concrete way; therefore, it is important to avoid offering explanations of death such as 'lost', 'gone away' or 'gone to sleep' that may cause misunderstandings and confusion.

Provide honest answers to their questions but do not feel you have to tell them everything in detail or all at once. Information can be built on over time.

Children may have disrupted sleep, altered appetite, less interest in play and may become more anxious about separation even when being left with familiar adults. There may be regression in skills such as language or toilet training.

### Children of primary school age

Between the ages of 5 and 7 years, children gradually begin to develop an understanding that death is permanent and irreversible and that the person who has died will not return. Children who have been bereaved when they were younger will have to re-process what has happened as they develop awareness of the finality of death.

Children's imagination and 'magical thinking' at this age can mean that some children may believe that their thoughts or actions caused the death, and they can feel guilty. Not being given sufficient information in age-appropriate language can lead them to 'make-up' and fill in the gaps in their knowledge. Children increasingly become aware that death is an inevitable part of life that happens to all living things. As a result, they can become anxious about their own, and others', health and safety.

Children at this age need honest answers to their questions that can be built on over time, and opportunities to express their feelings. They can need reassurance that they said or thought caused the death.

### Teenagers

Adolescence is a time of great change and grief impacts on the developmental task of moving from dependence to independence. Young people are moving from familial ties to increased involvement with peers. It can be difficult to ask for support while trying to demonstrate independence. Young people do not like to feel different to their peers in any way and being a bereaved young person can be extremely isolating. The support of peers with similar experiences can be very powerful.

Teenagers will have an adult understanding of the concept of death but often have their own beliefs and strongly held views, and may challenge the beliefs and explanations offered by others.

Some young people may respond to a death by becoming more withdrawn, some may 'act out' their distress while others cope with the awareness of their own mortality through risk-taking behaviour. Others may take on adult responsibilities and become 'the carer' for those around them. Keeping to the usual boundaries of acceptable behaviour can be reassuring for bereaved young people.

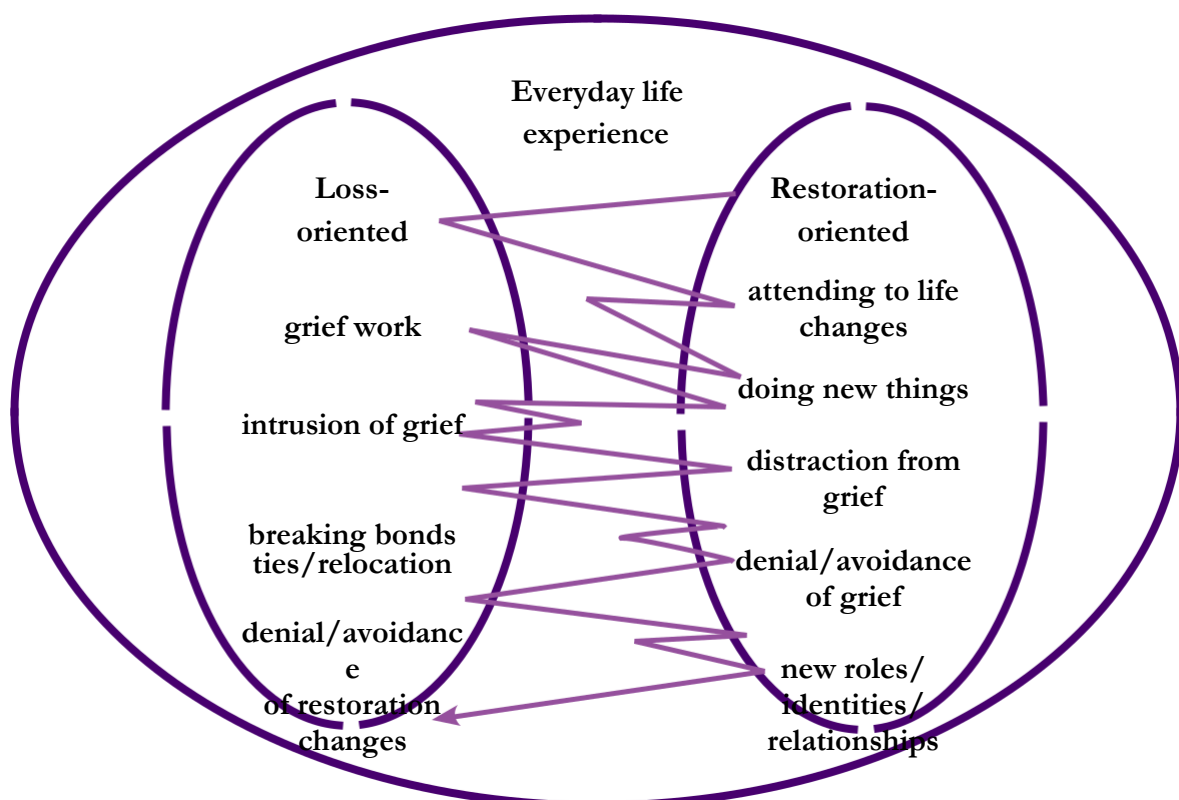
Young people who have been bereaved at an earlier age may need to re-process their grief as they think about and plan for their future and fully understand the impact of life without the person who died.

## Appendix 5 The process of grief

There is no set pattern or time limit to the complex emotions and processes of grief. It is something which everyone will experience in slightly different ways. However, understanding some of the suggested processes can be helpful in understanding your own grief and, in turn, that of your child. While there have been suggestions of linear models, most try to depict the complexity of the process.

Strobe and Schut's (1995) Dual Process Model is dynamic and shows the bereaved person alternating between "loss-orientation", which focuses on the loss of the person who has died, and "restoration-orientation", which avoids focusing on the loss. Both of these are needed for future adjustment and it is normal to move between the two modes.

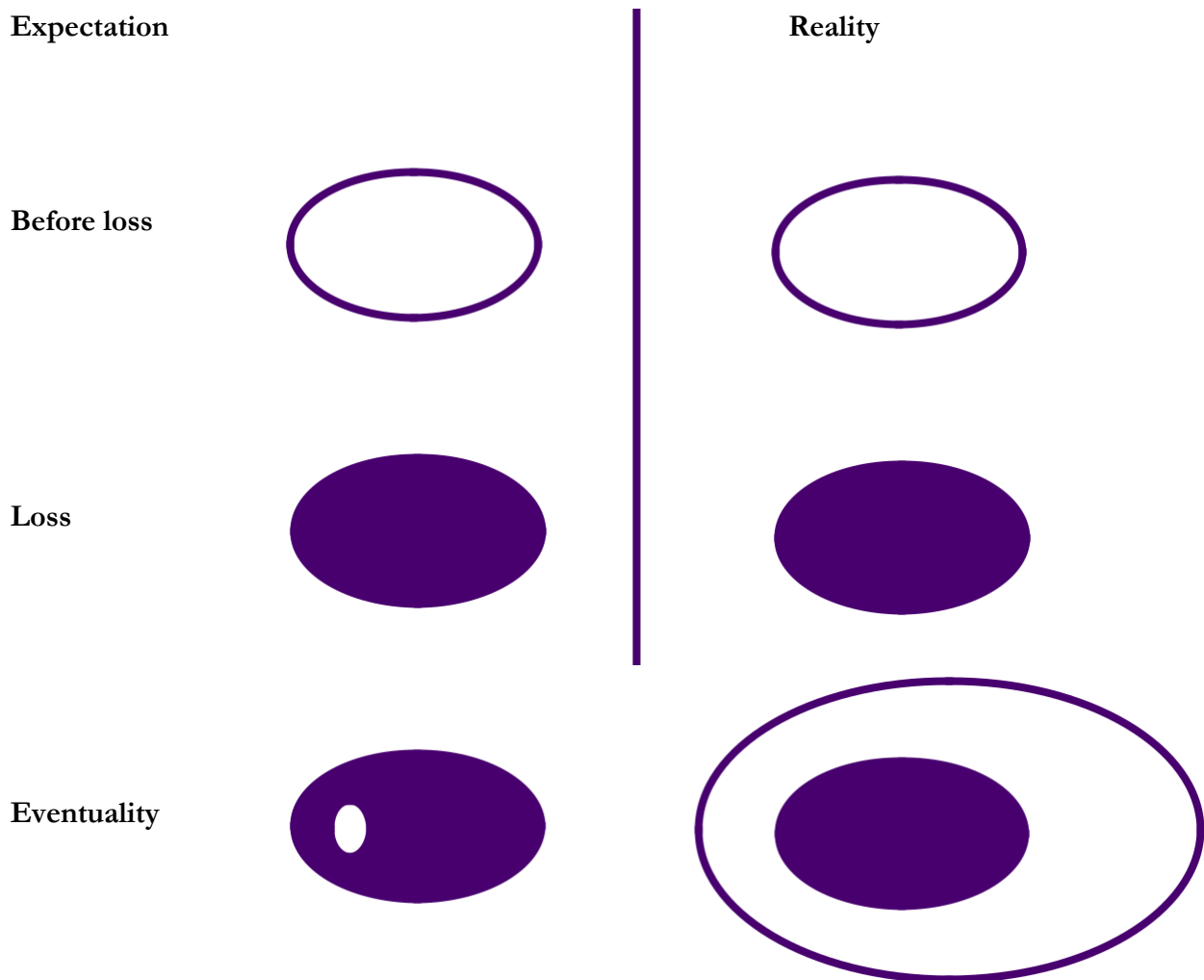
This is represented visually below:



Another model is described by Worden (2008) where he sets out the tasks of mourning. These are not linear stages but rather part of an active process where bereaved people need to:

- Accept the reality of their loss
- Feel and process the pain of their grief
- Adjust to a world without the person who has died
- Maintain an enduring connection with the person who has died, even when moving forward with their life

Tonkin's (1996) model of Growing Around Grief suggests that grief does not lessen over time or become smaller. Instead the person adjusts their lives to accommodate the pain. This in turn leads to the grief being less dominant and all-encompassing in their lives; other people and new experiences help the person to live with the grief, although it is not forgotten. Making new friends, having new experiences are all examples of "growing around grief".



None of these models fully explain the process of grief but may be helpful in recognising that for children there may be multiple times when they experience the recurrence of feelings of loss. Moving between grief and getting on with life is normal and daily ups and downs for a period of weeks or months after a significant loss can be expected.

## **Appendix 6 Suggested templates for letter to parents**

Before sending a letter home to parents about the death of a pupil, permission must be gained from the child's parents.

The contents of the letter and the distribution list must be agreed by the parents and school

Sample letter on death of a pupil:

Dear Parents

Your child's class teacher/form tutor/had the sad task of informing the children of the death of <Name>, a pupil in <Year>.

<Name> died from an illness called cancer. As you may be aware, many children who have cancer get better but sadly <Name> had been ill for a long time and died peacefully at home yesterday.

He/She was a very popular member of the class and will be missed by everyone who knew him/her.

When someone dies it is normal for their friends and family to experience lots of different feelings like sadness, anger and confusion. The children have been told that their teachers are willing to try to answer their questions at school but if there is anything more that you or your child needs to know, please do not hesitate to ring the school office and we would be more than happy to help you.

We will be arranging a memorial service in the school in the next few months as a means of celebrating <Name..>'s life.

Yours sincerely

<Name> Head Teacher

## **Appendix 7 Sample letter to bereaved parents:**

Dear

We are so very sorry to hear of Toby's death. There are no words to express the sadness of losing a child and we can only begin to imagine the anguish you must be going through.

Clearly, as a school community, we will miss him very much and we are doing our best to offer comfort and support to his friends and classmates. He was a much loved member of our school family.

If we can do anything to help as you plan Toby's funeral service or other memorial opportunities, please let us know. In time, we will also ensure that anything of Toby's that remains in school is returned to you, including photographs we may have on the school system.

Be assured that you are in our thoughts at this very sad time and do not hesitate to contact us if we can be of support in any way.

With sympathy,

Headteacher

## Appendix 8 Sample letter on death of a staff member:

Dear parents,

I am sorry to have to tell you that a much-loved member of our staff [name] has died. The children were told today and many will have been quite distressed at the news. No-one wants to see children sad, but we are very aware that factual information and emotional support are the best means of helping children deal with bereavement. I am sure there will be many parents who are also saddened by the news. Children respond in different ways so may dip in and out of sadness, and questions, whilst alternately playing or participating in their usual activities. This is normal and healthy.

You may find your child has questions to ask which we will answer in an age-appropriate way in school, but if you feel you would like more support and advice yourself, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. You may also find some very useful advice and resources online at [www.childbereavement.org.uk](http://www.childbereavement.org.uk)

We will share details of the funeral as soon as they are known. Children who wish to attend will be welcome to do so, though it will not be compulsory. It is likely that school will be closed on the morning or afternoon of the funeral as staff will, of course, wish to pay their respects to a very popular colleague.

I am sorry to be the bearer of sad news, but I appreciate an occurrence like this impacts the whole school community. I am so grateful for the thriving partnership we have with parents and trust that we, together, will be able to guide and support the children through what may be, for many, a very new experience in their lives.

Yours.....

## Appendix 9 Bereavement Plan In times of COVID

Children's understanding of death varies with their developmental stage, so all support offered will be tailored to the individual.

While the stark reality of coronavirus is dominating the news, it's important to remember that children grieve all deaths equally. And whether COVID-19 related or from causes we're more familiar with, right now grieving is a different experience.

As we can't come together and take comfort in each other's presence, we need to be able to respond to death in a virtual space. Should a child suffer a bereavement during the time the school is closed, we would look to provide virtual support.

### 9a Bereavement of children's family members

1. A member of SLT to phone/ email the family to offer condolences.
2. The same member of SLT will inform relevant staff.
3. FSA to email the family helpful resources, a link to Daisy's Dream and a list of helpful books for children
4. Ed Psychologist to make contact with family
5. Support and communications with family to be recorded on my concern.
6. Further advice can be found on the child bereavement website:

<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=bc9f3d7d-7b43-421a-8ed4-4335f9c23b35>

### 9b Death of a member of the school community

#### 9 biDeath of a pupil

The HT (or DHT if HT is unavailable) will contact the pupil's family.

Possible structure of call:

- **Acknowledge what's happened** – "I'm so sorry to hear that Anthony died yesterday."
  - Don't be afraid to ask how the death occurred – you need an understanding of what's happened so you can support your school community appropriately
- **Express support on behalf of the school** – "I'm calling to let you know that we're here for you and to see if there's anything we can do to help."
- **Discuss how to share the news with the rest of the school community** – "We'll need to let Anthony's classmates know what's happened. They'll be heartbroken about this, and we need to let them know that we'll be there to support them."

The following steps will be taken in line with has been agreed with the family.

If the family have asked us not to share news of the death, we will aim to find a balance between respecting the family's wishes, and supporting other pupils whilst also preventing harmful speculation. The LA and governors will be consulted for advice and support.

In this situation:

1. We will hold a virtual SLT meeting to discuss our response to the situation
2. HT to inform CoG
3. HT to inform the LA [Debbie.Smith@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Debbie.Smith@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) 01344 354014
4. The SLT member designated in SLT meeting will phone staff who were closest to the child (class teacher, TA, ELSA etc.)
5. HT to email all staff once the SLT initial phone calls are complete

6. SLT members to phone parents of the child's close friends asking them to break the news to their child but asking for their discretion until we have informed the wider school community
7. Any enquiries from the media **must be referred to the HT** and discussed with the Bonitas team before a response is given. Take the name and number of the person making the enquiry and tell them you will get back to them as soon as possible.
8. HT to prepare a letter for parents including a link to Child Bereavement UK and the NHS <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=45dc8050-2152-49e8-a8d7-50629fc0a08c> and <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-and-bereavement/> (Template letter in SLT drive corona virus folder)
9. SLT agree a collaborative project for everyone in the school community to take part in if they wish to and share. Examples can be found at: <https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=7c952b41-2a99-443c-827d-25a739301a25>

### 9 bii Death of a member of staff

The HT (or DHT if HT is unavailable) will contact the staff member's family.

Possible structure of call:

- **Acknowledge what's happened** – "I'm so sorry to hear that Kelly died yesterday."
  - Don't be afraid to ask how the death occurred – you need an understanding of what's happened so you can support your school community appropriately
- **Express support on behalf of the school** – "I'm calling to let you know that we're here for you and to see if there's anything we can do to help."
- **Discuss how to share the news with the rest of the school community** – "We'll need to let our pupils know what's happened. They'll be heartbroken about this, and we need to let them know that we'll be there to support them."

The following steps will be taken in line with has been agreed with the family.

If the family have asked us not to share news of the death, we will aim to find a balance between respecting the family's wishes, and supporting other staff and pupils whilst also preventing harmful speculation. The LA and governors will be consulted for advice and support.

In this situation:

1. We will hold a virtual SLT meeting to discuss our response to the situation
2. HT to inform CoG
3. HT to inform the LA [Debbie.Smith@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Debbie.Smith@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) 01344 354014  
[Rachel.Morgan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk](mailto:Rachel.Morgan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk) 01344 354037
4. SLT to set up a 'phone tree'
5. The HT will phone staff who were closest to the colleague
6. SLT phone all members of staff according to the 'phone tree' asking staff not to contact each other before an agreed time to give SLT time to speak to everyone
7. SLT to phone parents of the children who were closest to the member of staff friends asking them to break the news to their child but asking for their discretion until we have informed the wider school community
8. Any enquiries from the media **must be referred to the HT** and discussed with the LA comms team before a response is given. Take the name and number of the person making the enquiry and tell them you will get back to them as soon as possible.  
[Communications.Marketing@Bracknell-Forest.gov.uk](mailto:Communications.Marketing@Bracknell-Forest.gov.uk)
9. HT to prepare a letter for parents including a link to Child Bereavement UK and the NHS [https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=45dc8050-2152-](https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=45dc8050-2152-49e8-a8d7-50629fc0a08c)

[49e8-a8d7-50629fc0a08c](#) and <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/children-and-bereavement/> (Template letter in SLT drive corona virus folder)

10. SLT agree a collaborative project for everyone in the school community to take part in if they wish to and share. Examples can be found at:  
<https://www.childbereavementuk.org/Handlers/Download.ashx?IDMF=7c952b41-2a99-443c-827d-25a739301a25>

#### 9 c Post incident (death of pupil or member of staff)

- Review policy and procedures, update as necessary
- Watch out for signs of grief turning to depression. E.g. three months after the event, someone is not sleeping properly, obsessively ruminating or thinking and talking about the deceased or changes their eating habits
- If a child becomes depressed, make an appointment for the HT & AHT to discuss the situation with the parents and offer to contact the school nurse and or CAMHS
- Remind staff of the harmony counselling details
- If a member of staff becomes depressed advise them to see their GP
- If deemed necessary by the HT, staff should be referred to the Occupational Health Service

#### 9 d Contact details

Name	Contact details	Role
		HT
		CoG
		DHT
		AHT
		AHT
		AHT
Debbie Smith	<a href="mailto:Debbie.Smith@bracknell-forest.gov.uk">Debbie.Smith@bracknell-forest.gov.uk</a> 01344 354014	LA safeguarding Lead
Rachel Morgan	<a href="mailto:Rachel.Morgan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk">Rachel.Morgan@bracknell-forest.gov.uk</a> 01344 354037	LA Assistant Director Education
		STEP
LA comms team	<a href="mailto:Communications.Marketing@Bracknell-Forest.gov.uk">Communications.Marketing@Bracknell-Forest.gov.uk</a>	Media



## Appendix 10 Supporting grieving staff from a distance

You may not be able to put your normal school bereavement strategy into action right now, but there's still plenty you can do to support grieving staff. It's very similar to what you'd do under normal circumstances, but in a virtual space.

### Talking to staff about loss

You probably know how to respond to grief when it's in the same room with you: sit with the person, hold their hand, rub their back, and just be present.

But doing the same over the phone or through a video chat, where you're confronting grief from a distance and have nothing to offer but words, will be a different experience. You might be naturally tempted to fill the space with words. So before that happens, take a moment to reflect:

- |              |  |
|--------------|--|
| <b>DO</b>    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Be caring and compassionate</li><li>• Offer your condolences</li><li>• Let them know that work comes second at this time</li><li>• Be conscious of diversity – don't assume that someone else shares your beliefs</li></ul>  |
| <b>DON'T</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ignore the situation</li><li>• Assume you know how the bereaved person feels</li><li>• Say anything that minimises the loss, such as 'we all have to go sometime' or 'she had some good innings'</li><li>• Make light of the bereavement, such as 'time heals all wounds' or 'you have to be strong now'</li></ul> |

The above, along with more dos and don'ts, can be found on [Cruse Bereavement Care's website](#).

### Recognise that grieving is different right now

Every community in the world marks death by coming together to observe funeral rites, and that process is severely disrupted right now. It's possible that someone's inability to see a body or attend a funeral can lead to a sense of disbelief that the death has actually occurred.

This can delay grief, so someone can appear unaffected for some time until reality hits. On a practical level, this means you should:

- **Check in with bereaved staff regularly**, even if they say that they're fine – let them know you're there to listen and let them lead the conversation
- **Ask if they need some time off**, but don't push it – if funerals and memorial services are delayed, staff may prefer to carry on with working for now and take time off later. Or grief itself may be delayed and it might take some time for reality to hit. Let them know that you'll be flexible about when staff can take bereavement leave
- **Signpost to any support that's available to them** through your school's bereavement team or your local authority's or trust's HR department

### Provide a virtual space for staff to come together in grief

It's said that 'grief shared is halved'. Grief is communal, and sharing grief is a necessary part of recovery. Attendance at funerals is limited to immediate family right now, so rituals can take on even more significance when we can't come together to mourn.

- **Hold a virtual memorial service** – this can be as formal or informal as suits your school community

- **Create a memorial page** – you can do this on your school website, or set up a page with e.g. Google Site or WordPress (make sure this is only accessible to your school community)

Of course, grieving is a process rather than an event, so ongoing support is vital.

Take care of yourself

Supporting staff through bereavement can take a toll on you emotionally. Even bereavement professionals have regular debriefs to help them talk through what they're experiencing and monitor their mental health. You're no different.

If you don't take the time to consciously slow things down and process what's happened, you're not going to get the time later. The greatest responsibility you have as a leader is to stay well.

- **Set limits** – now, more than ever, set working hours and stick to them. Let staff and parents know that you won't be available outside of those hours. If you can't do it for yourself, do it for your staff. Model what self-care looks like
- **Delegate** – don't look at delegation as fobbing off your own work on someone else. Use this time to give a staff member the opportunity to show they can step up
- **Ask for help** – don't suffer in silence. Talk to friends, call a helpline, or talk regularly with your chair of governors
- **Encourage your staff to check in with each other** - it's not all on you to monitor and support the staff. Supporting one another builds community, which in turn builds resilience, according to a report from the British Psychological Society about [teacher resilience during school closures](#)